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## **INTRODUCTION: QUESTIONING ARCHAEOLOGY'S PLACE IN THE WORLD**

Robin Skeates, John Carman, and Carol McDavid

### **More than a handbook**

This volume reappraises the place of archaeology in the contemporary world by providing a series of essays that critically engage with old and new debates in the field of public archaeology. It does so by evaluating the range of research strategies and methods used in archaeological heritage studies, by identifying and contributing to key debates in this dynamic field, by critically exploring the history of archaeological resource management, and by questioning the fundamental principles and practices through which the archaeological past is understood and used today. In doing so, it enters into the overlapping domains of: 'public', 'community', or 'engaged' archaeology; heritage, or cultural resource management; and heritage and museum studies; as well as a wide range of related fields within the social sciences. In recent years, this subject area has seen a proliferation of published texts aimed primarily at the academic market, particularly in the UK and USA—including some written or edited by ourselves (see, e.g., for the last decade alone: Skeates 2000; Carman 2002; Howard 2003; Merriman 2004; Smith 2004; Carman 2005; Mathers et al. 2005; Hunter and Ralston 2006; Smith 2006; Colwell-Chantonaphonh 2008; Fairclough et al. 2008; Naffé et al. 2008; Rubertone 2008; Smith and Waterton 2009; Sørensen and Carman 2009; Benton 2010; Harrison 2010; Messenger and Smith 2010; Smith et al. 2010; West 2010). This literature—conveniently if provocatively characterised by Carman (2002: 1–4) as either 'commentary', 'practice', or 'research'—has successfully described the diversity of

archaeological resources, stakeholders, principles, and practices involved in public archaeology and the range of approaches taken to it. But what this volume does is somewhat different. In line with the ethos of the *Oxford Handbooks in Archaeology* series, our volume comprises an extensive collection of commissioned essays, both from experienced practitioners and from established and ‘younger’ scholars, which critically engage with old and new debates in the field of public archaeology, to push thinking forward in interesting new directions that will provide a foundation for future work. Many of the chapters are consequently characterized by a questioning attitude, as opposed to narrative representations of the current state of play in public archaeology, in order to stimulate discussion about past, present, and future understandings of archaeology and its relationship to contemporary society. Some of our authors also adopt a self-critical attitude, not only by describing their own work, but also by clarifying the diverse principles and terminologies upon which their ideas and practices are based, and the intellectual and social contexts from which they are derived, in order to encourage debate and understanding concerning the impact of their work. Many (but by no means all) of our contributors are Anglo-American in nationality or residence, reflecting the dominance of Anglophone discourse in this field. However, we believe that the relevance of our volume is global, particularly in terms of the ideas explored in general and through a number of case-studies from around the world. More specifically, we envisage that our volume will be read by three sets of audiences with somewhat different requirements: first, as a key text for the many students engaged in archaeological heritage and museum studies; second, as a source of debate and point of reference for the growing number of academics working in the field of public archaeology; and third, as a stimulating resource for professional archaeologists working in the public and private sectors of cultural resource management.

There are many ways in which our volume could have been structured, for all of the chapters overlap in one way or another. We have chosen to divide it into four parts where the complementarities seem strongest, which should at least help you decide where you want to start reading.

The first part of this volume is on histories of public archaeology. Here, our contributors examine critically both the ways in which public archaeology has developed in different parts of the world and the consequences of those histories on our understandings of the past today. A general chapter on the unintended origins of current archaeological heritage management (Carman) is followed by others which explore the enduring significance of the 1916 ‘National Park Organic Act’ (Soderland); the sometimes turbulent history of relations between archaeologists and metal detector users in England and Wales (Thomas); the changing significance of the senses in representations of prehistoric Malta (Skeates); and the development of public archaeology in colonial and post-colonial Latin America (Funari and Bezerra) and India (Chakrabarti).

The second part is about researching public archaeology. The chapters here deal with the methods and strategies used in the field of public archaeology research, which, as recently argued by Sørensen and Carman (2009), are rarely—if ever—explicitly discussed. They range from archaeological historiography (Murray), to critical discourse analysis (Smith and Waterton), the application of the concepts of ‘cognitive ownership’ (Boyd) and ‘heritagescape’ (Garden), to participatory action research (McGhee), and the quantitative and qualitative methods used to uncover the antiquities market (Brodie), including multi-sited ethnography (Kersel). Other chapters in this volume adopt yet more approaches.

Part three is concerned with managing public archaeological resources. It examines some of the principles, policies, and practices involved in the heritage management of archaeological landscapes, sites, and collections, and some of their social implications. Individual chapters discuss: the relevance of the ideals of sustainability to the stewardship of archaeological sites (Pace), how the public can participate in the management of the historic environment (Schofield, Kiddey, and Lashua), the failures and successes of cultural resources management in California (Praetzellis), the place of archaeology in the debate over future land-use in England (Trow and Grenville), and the formation, management, and use of archaeological fieldwork archives (Swain).

The fourth part is on working at archaeology with the public. It reveals some of the variety of ideals, practices, and issues affecting archaeology and its publics in contemporary societies. The first set of chapters underline the status of archaeologists as public servants: through an exploration of the complex and developing profession of archaeology (Darvill); a detailing of the myriad public benefits of archaeology (Little); and an assessment of the value of ‘community service learning’ to archaeological practice and pedagogy (Nassaney). The second set of chapters deals with the public interpretation and presentation of archaeology, seen through: a career spent publicizing archaeology in the UK (Aston); an analysis of archaeological communities and languages in Europe (Kristiansen); a critique of the public presentation of rock-art at the Swedish World Heritage Site of Tanum (Gustafsson and Karlsson); a review of a participatory GIS-based research project undertaken in Levuka, the former colonial capital of Fiji (Purser); and a discussion of the socio-political context of historical archaeology research in the USA, with particular reference to participatory archaeology projects undertaken in working communities in Baltimore, Maryland (Gadsby and Chidester). The third set of chapters focuses on public learning and education in the

USA, including: the gendered development of public archaeology in the USA (Kehoe); the application of constructivist learning theory in museum settings such as the Hermitage, home to the seventh President of the USA (Bartoy); the identification of key themes to be used in archaeology education to create an archaeologically literate public (Franklin and Moe); and a discussion of the implications for public archaeology education of the ‘culture wars’ between ‘traditionalists’ and ‘secular progressives’ over the shaping of American society (Jeppson). The final set of chapters concerns working at archaeology with particular publics, ranging from African-American descendant communities (Davidson and Brandon, and La Roche), to Native American groups (Watkins), to disabled persons (Phillips and Gilchrist).

## **Questions and debates**

Thinking about these chapters in more detail, in this second part to our introduction, we outline some of the wide range of questions and debates raised by our contributors in relation to archaeology’s place in the world. We consciously do not offer firm answers here, since we hope that you will make your own judgements having encountered some of the variety of opinions offered in the following chapters, and because the debates that we are engaged in are all on-going.

One of the starting points for this volume is the recognition that ‘public archaeology’, as a term, concept, and practice, requires critical evaluation. This raises the questions, then, of what is meant by ‘the public’ and ‘the public good’ in relation to archaeological practice and heritage (and for previous discussions of this see, e.g., Carman 2002: 96–112; Merriman 2004: 1–2). Certainly archaeologists and law-makers have different perspectives on this, and,

as Soderland highlights, their conceptions have also changed over time. Likewise, a number of our authors question the definition and scope of public archaeology, and express different opinions as to its parameters in theory and in practice. Frankin and Moe, for example, ask whether ‘public archaeology’ should be equated with ‘cultural resource management’ or with ‘public education’ and, so, if ‘public archaeology’ should refer to archaeology *with* the public, *for* the public, *of* the public, or to archaeology of public resources. These are questions addressed as early as the late 1960s in the first substantive text on the topic (McGimsey 1972). Such questions lead to more concerning the acceptance and status of public archaeology, both within the archaeological profession as a whole (as reflected, for example, in archaeology ethics statements), and in the eyes of different kinds of archaeologists. Put more bluntly, why—as recognised by Catherine Hills and Julian Richards (2006) —have public archaeology programmes and practitioners been under-valued, dismissed, or derided, particularly by university-based archaeology teachers and researchers? Partly in response, public archaeologists point out that all archaeologists need to be able to respond persuasively to questions concerning the benefits of archaeological practice and knowledge to the public, particularly at a time in which public funding of archaeology is under threat. But public archaeologists could also raise their game when contributing to academic debates, particularly by critically evaluating their own qualitative and quantitative research methods, used, for example, to reconstruct the history of archaeology, or to uncover the antiquities trade, or to study ‘heritagescapes’, or when engaging in collaborative research with communities (although on this see Sørensen and Carman 2009).

Visions of future archaeologies are implied here, but in looking forward many of our authors also question the origins and development of archaeology and of public archaeology in different parts of the world. Far from neutral questions surround, for example: the historical

circumstances in which networks of archaeologists and programmes of archaeological research were established with the help of private and state sponsorship; or in which ancient monuments and collections of other archaeological remains came to be investigated, represented, preserved, and managed as (often national) ‘heritage’ (Kohl and Fawcett 1997; Diaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Jones 1997; Atkinson et al. 1996; Hunter 1996), and often at the expense of local communities and their histories (Layton 1989a, b; Carmichael et al. 1994; Davidson et al. 1995; Swidler et al 1997); or in which professionalized contract archaeology has come to comprise the majority of archaeological research and employment (King 2005; Everill 2009). In whose interest these developments have been is clearly a matter of debate.

This brings us to the multifaceted politics of the past, an issue raised especially by Gathercole and Lowenthal (1990) and more recently by Hamilakis and Duke (2007) among others. One might start by asking archaeologists to consider their own political viewpoints, both personal and shared (although archaeologists may not be the best judges here); for although archaeology as a scientific discipline may aspire to be impartial, in practice it does not exist outside of contemporary political concerns and power relations. Some of our contributors ask how politically conservative or liberal archaeologists and heritage managers are, while Kristiansen inquires why archaeology has become increasingly fragmented into national, regional, and local archaeological communities (and see Kristiansen 2001; Kobyliński 2001: 44–6). The status of archaeological interpretation is also open to question: as Murray puts it, how do archaeologists justify their claims to knowledge? Then there is the issue of how archaeologists should engage with the (often competing) interests of different political, social, ethnic, and religious groups and regimes, some of whom promote interpretations of the past that are at odds with those proposed by archaeologists. For example, Chakrabarti



considers whether contemporary studies of ancient DNA should be abandoned, since their results might fuel ethnic conflicts, whereas some of our other contributors wonder whether archaeologists should not try harder to interest and influence politicians, for the good of archaeology. There are no easy answers, for there are so many (often contradictory) factors to consider. For example, while thinking about the constraints that authoritarian regimes have placed upon archaeological interpretation, archaeologists might also question whether democratic political regimes have always lead to a flourishing of archaeology (and for some examples see Ucko 1995). And in attempting to right the wrongs of the past, is it not ironic that (outsider) archaeologists and heritage managers, having been implicated in the historic appropriation of culturally significant material and in the marginalization of closely associated communities throughout the world, should now feel responsible to help reinterpret, publicize, and enhance the value of native archaeology? Gadsby and Chidester ask, is it not the ethical duty of archaeologists to promote social justice, and to offer solutions to the problems of class, labour, and inequality in the contemporary global economy (e.g. McGuire and Paynter 1991; Little 2006; Saitta 2007)? But we can still question the extent to which dominant archaeologists and organizations continue to export their scientific techniques, interpretations, languages, and heritage values to other archaeologists, cultural resource managers, and indigenous peoples in other parts of the world. Watkins is, therefore, justified in asking, first, what the use of archaeology is to indigenous groups, and second, what form the methodological and theoretical characteristics of indigenous archaeology should take (see, e.g., Smith 2004).

One might expect national and international laws to provide a useful set of rules of conduct in relation to such potentially conflictual archaeological situations, but laws can be questioned and are broken. So, it is worth following Soderland's example to ask not only what laws and

regulations apply to archaeology in different parts of the world, but also what interests and compromises have contributed to the legislative process, how effective legislation has been in safeguarding archaeological remains or mandating archaeological heritage management, and in what circumstances laws have become outdated and unenforceable. Beyond this, it is possible to ask how laws ‘work’ on archaeological material and what the consequences are for archaeology when it is placed in the legal realm (Carman 1996). We can also explore how actively engaged archaeologists are with the legislative process and with working through the implications of new laws, relating, for example, to public education, or to the social inclusion of disabled persons. Looting, corruption, and the (illicit) trade in antiquities are of particular concern to archaeologists, who have increasingly sought to understand what impact the trade has had on the archaeological resource, why various stakeholders (including some archaeologists) become involved in this trade, what diverse meanings and values are ascribed to illegally excavated objects at various stages in the trade, what the changing size and shape of the market is, and how effective programmes to counter the illicit trade have been. Inevitably, legislation creates grey areas, populated by questions such as whether archaeologists should ‘buy back’ artefacts from looters, or what might be regarded as responsible metal detector use by members of the public (see, e.g., Renfrew 2000; Brodie et al. 2000, 2001, 2006; Brodie and Tubb 2002).

What to do with the dynamic heritage of the past in the present lies at the heart of most political, legal, and social debate relating to public archaeology, and is a question considered by many of the contributors to this volume. A complex starting point is to understand what is meant by terms such as ‘heritage’—both ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ (see, e.g., Smith and Akagawa 2009; Lira and Amoêda 2010), ‘community’ (Smith and Waterton 2009), and ‘landscape’ (see, e.g., Johnson 2007; Hicks et al. 2007; Lozny 2008), particularly in different

countries and cultures. One useful way of approaching this issue is to explore what Garden (2006, 2009) defines as ‘heritagescapes’, in order to gauge to what extent historic sites and landscapes are connected to (or marginalized from) their surroundings, and to understand how individuals, and especially indigenous or local people, value and identify with those places and spaces, even if they do not ‘own’ them as property. It also leads us to ask whose heritage is put on the map by heritage managers, what role the public, and community groups in particular, might play in designating places as official heritage sites, and what the consequences of such designation are. This might prompt archaeologists to question the values that they, and the diverse public (ranging from indigenous groups to visiting tourists to metal detector users), assign to archaeological resources, including sites in the landscape and excavation archives in museums (issues that are also discussed in Smith et al. 2010). In practice, a fundamental question concerns precisely by whom, and how, heritage should be managed on behalf of the public, including future generations. Should archaeological remains be withdrawn from the public domain and managed by state-funded heritage ‘experts’ with a background in archaeology, or also controlled and interpreted by members of local communities (Smith 2004, 2006; Carman 2005)? And to what extent should threatened and fragile archaeological resources be mitigated by developer-funded archaeologists, developed then consumed by visitors as sensually stimulating heritage, preserved according to the ideals of conservation and sustainability, or left to decay and treasure-hunting?

This helps put into context questions regarding the nature and status of the archaeological profession, including its public dimensions, particularly in different parts of the world (see, e.g., for the UK, Aitchison 1999; Aitchison and Edwards 2003, 2008; Everill 2009).

Questions that arise are: how attractive is archaeology as a career, and to what social groups? how well trained are archaeology students in applied, public archaeology? what is

the age, gender, and disability profile of the archaeology workforce in general, and of archaeologists working, for example, in public education? how distinct are archaeologists employed in contract archaeology compared to those engaged in academic research, and what are the public aspects of their work? what is the scale of contract archaeology, and how can it be improved in practice: both for the good of archaeology and for the public? Overarching these questions is the issue of the principles by which the archaeological profession should be regulated.

A concern with the public lies at the heart of this volume: including questions relating to public perceptions of, and participation in, archaeology. Archaeologists still need to learn more about what members of the public know, do not know, and want to know about archaeology (Holtorf 2005, 2007), and how misconceptions are perpetuated about archaeological practice (as treasure hunting, for example) and research (as the study of dinosaurs, for example: see, e.g., Schadla-Hall 2004; Kehoe 2008). As Kehoe asks, how well served is the public by the most easily accessed information about archaeology available on Google? Many people become interested in archaeology, but to what extent do archaeologists actually want, or be expected to have, public engagement in their work is a matter of debate. And, even for those archaeologists who do wish to create more inclusive programmes, there remains the problem of precisely how to make them succeed as genuinely participatory, collaborative, and equitable ventures that make a difference to more than just a select group of people (Marshall 2002). Going one step further, should we expect archaeologists to contribute to activist histories aimed at social change, justice, and empowerment (see, e.g., Saitta 2007; Little and Shackel 2007)?

A significant proportion of our contributors are involved with public education in archaeology, and their essays expose some of the tensions inherent in the objectives of public archaeology. It is more complicated than simply asking what archaeologists want children and adults to know about archaeology, for, as Jeppson highlights, there are politically competing kinds of history that can be told through archaeology, ranging from the heritage of Western civilization and nation states to the broader study of humanity, and from science-based processual archaeology and preservation-focussed cultural resource management to more relativistic post-processual and indigenous perspectives. Bartoy's call for archaeology education programmes to follow the constructivist theory of learning and to provide more active learning situations raises the question of how effective existing archaeology education programmes are, particularly in terms of producing a better-informed, more archaeologically-literate, public. The same question also applies to archaeological publications (of all kinds), which are a well-established, but heavily conventionalized, medium through which archaeologists seek to disseminate their knowledge to audiences (see, e.g., Hills and Richards 2006). Here, the questions of when, what, how, where, and for whom, to publish remain a dilemma for archaeologists, particularly when their audiences have no specialist knowledge of archaeology. Furthermore, as Kristiansen reminds us, archaeologists, and especially native English speakers, should not take the language of archaeology for granted.

Having explored our book, then, we hope that you will have not only discovered what we know about public archaeology, but also questioned and debated our knowledge and opinions. In this way we might all contribute to redefining archaeology's place in the world.

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